Abraham Lincoln

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
of ABRAHAM LINCOLN by
MR and MRS RALPH EMERSON
of ROCKFORD ILL.

To W. F. Truesdell
with regards of
J. Truesdell

"I MUST STAND WITH ANYBODY THAT STANDS RIGHT; STAND WITH HIM WHILE HE IS RIGHT, AND PART WITH HIM WHEN HE GOES WRONG" — Abraham Lincoln

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MR. & MRS. RALPH EMERSON'S PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS *of* ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS
MCMIX

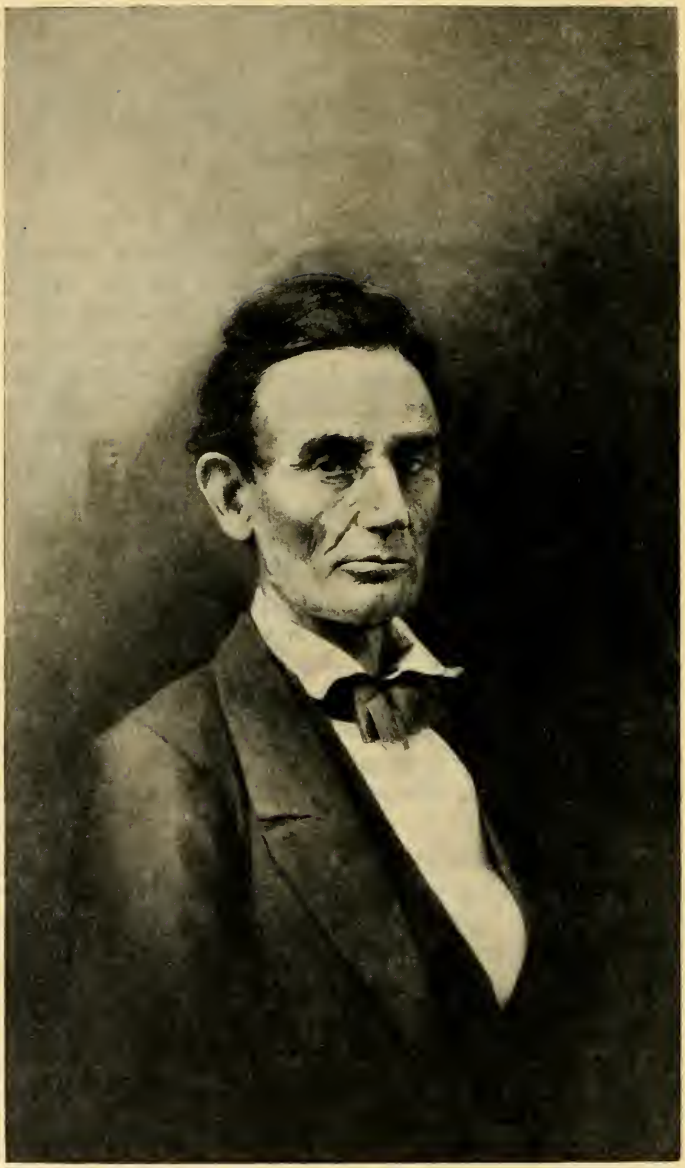
An Intimate View of Abe Lincoln

By Ralph Emerson

ABOUT sixty years ago I was, for a time, intimate with Abraham Lincoln. People are apt to think of him largely as a joking, story-telling man. When he was alone with friends who did not expect a story or a joke, he was a very quiet, earnest, almost sad-faced man. I remember one afternoon when we were strolling together after court, through the delightful "Money Creek Timber," I sought his advice with regard to my own future life. It was given so quietly and earnestly that I soon after embraced the first opportunity to enter a business life.

So impressed was I with his ability that when, four years later, we became involved in a very important litigation, we retained him to help. I paid him the largest retaining fee, he said, he had ever, up to that time, received. So important was the litigation that a host of lawyers were engaged on each side, including such men as Senator Douglas, Gov. Wm. H. Seward, and quite a number of other lawyer members of Congress.

When the case came on for hearing in Cincinnati, as Lincoln had not had sufficient time to prepare, he did not speak, but he was present through the whole hearing, which consumed several days. We were limited to two lawyers on a side. Edwin M. Stanton, later the celebrated "War Secretary," was one of those who spoke for us, delivering a speech which he had spent a very long time in studying up and preparing. So intensely interested was Lincoln in this speech, that, forgetting the dignity of a United States Court,



LINCOLN AS I FIRST KNEW HIM.

he stood rapt in attention, or else was even walking back and forth in the court room listening intently. It was the first time Lincoln and Stanton met, and from what Lincoln said to me when he was President I am satisfied that it was that speech which made Lincoln choose Stanton as his final Secretary of War.

Let me illustrate. There was talk, at one time, of a compromise with the other side. Stanton was a man, when excited, of a lion-like countenance. The moment he heard the subject of compromise broached in our office he was ablaze at once; and with gestures as though he held a sword in his hand, he exclaimed: "Compromise! I know of but one way to compromise with an enemy, and that is with a sword in your hand, and to smite, and keep smiting!" And his countenance was a blaze of wrath as he spoke. What wonder that Lincoln, when disappointed in other men, sent for Stanton as his final Secretary of War!

When the hearing was through, Mr. Lincoln called me to him as we left the court room and wanted to walk and talk.

For block after block he walked rapidly forward, silent and deeply dejected.

At last, turning to me, he exclaimed: "Emerson, I'm going home." A pause. "I am going home to study law."

"Why," I exclaimed, "Mr. Lincoln you stand at the head of the bar in Illinois now. What are you talking about?"

"Yes, yes," he said. "I do occupy a good position there, and I think I can get along with the way things are going there now. But these college trained men who have devoted their whole lives to study are coming west don't you see? They study on a single case perhaps for months, as we never do.

LINCOLN AS HE APPEARED WHEN TELLING A STORY TO ILLUSTRATE A POINT HE WISHED TO MAKE

"We are apt to catch up the thing as it goes before a jury and trust to the inspiration of the moment. They have got as far as Ohio now. They will soon be in Illinois."

Another long pause. Then stopping and turning towards me, his countenance suddenly assumed that look of strong determination which we who knew him best sometimes saw on his face, and he exclaimed:

"I'm going home to study law! I'm as good as any of them, and when they get out to Illinois I will be ready for them."

He finished, and at once became very cheerful, as though he now saw a clear path before him.

We walked on down by the banks of the Ohio river. He suddenly turned and pointed across the river to Kentucky, and said: "Here is this fine city of Cincinnati, and over there is the little town of Covington. Covington has just as good a location as Cincinnati, and a fine country back of it. It was settled before Cincinnati. Why is it not a bigger city? Just because of slavery, and nothing else. My people used to live over there, and I know. Why the other day I went to ship my family on a little railroad they have got down there from Covington back into the country. I went to the ticket office and found a lank fellow sprawling over the counter, who had to count up quite a while on his fingers how much two and one-half fares would come to. While over here in Cincinnati, when I shove my money through the window, the three tickets and the change would come flying back at me quick. And it is just the same way in all things through Kentucky. That is what slavery does for the white man."

We walked on down the river and the conversation turned on a trip to Palestine and Jerusalem. His countenance at once lit up, and he exclaimed, "Yes!

As Lincoln appeared as I last saw him in the darkest days of the war

To tread the ground the Saviour trod!" Never from other human lips have I heard the word "Saviour" pronounced with such depth of earnestness. Apparently absorbed with the two thoughts of the evils of slavery, and of the "Saviour," we wandered on in silence, and so parted.

Time went on—he was President—and the war came with defeat after defeat to the Union armies. Such men as Horace Greeley were loudly calling for peace at any terms with our "erring sisters, who should be allowed to depart in peace." Everything looked dark. Being in Washington with my brother, Prof. Emerson of Beloit College, Judge Davis of the Supreme Court (one of Lincoln's best friends), suggested that we go and cheer "Old Abe" up a bit. As we went, Judge Davis said: "You must expect him to tell some kind of a story. If he could not relieve his mind in the darkest hours in this way, he would die."

We found Lincoln sitting very sad and pensive, for news had just come in of one of the worst defeats of the war. We told him that we had come to tell him that no matter how dark the clouds, and what might be said in the east, the great west was with him, and had absolute confidence in him and in God, and that we would pull through. He looked up with a sad smile and then said: "Yes, but I am sometimes reminded of Old Mother Partington. You know the old lady lived on the sea beach, and one time a big storm came up and the waves began to rise till the water began to come in under her cabin door. She got a broom and went to sweeping it out. But the water rose higher and higher; to her knees; to her waist; at last to her chin, but she kept on sweeping and exclaiming, 'I'll keep on sweeping as long as the broom lasts, and we will see whether the storm or the

broom will last the longest!' And that is the way with me." And his jaws came together with that firm grip we who knew him best were familiar with. Looking earnestly at the fireplace he resumed: "Yes, Providence! As I read history I see we can not tell in advance what God's plans about any nation are. We can only find out by seeing what the result finally is when it is all over. All we have to do is to do the best we can with what we have, and trust the result to God." And his jaws again assumed that set expression, and we knew what was his iron determination. He thanked us heartily for coming to tell him what the people thought "at home." And so we parted.

This was the last time I saw him alive. When he was in his coffin, Mrs. Emerson and I sat for a long time gazing at his countenance. The deep lines produced by anxious thought were still there. But across each line was written very plainly: "The peace of God has settled on his quiet spirit."

It was a marked contrast to the time when I had last seen him. The dead countenance appeared to say that he had died with the consciousness of having done his best and that he was satisfied with the result.

Abraham Lincoln and Wait Talcott

WAIT TALCOTT, father of Mrs. Ralph Emerson, was a member of the Illinois State Senate at the time when Lincoln first ran for U. S. Senator. The contest was very long and severe, and Mr. Talcott was one of the leaders on the Lincoln side. But there were a few members of the House who refused to vote for Lincoln, and it was impossible quite to secure a majority. When the legislature was nearly wearied out one day a conference took place in the back part of the hall, where the legislature met between Lincoln, Logan and others of the Republican leaders when it was agreed that Lyman Trumbull should be elected Senator in place of Lincoln, which was done. But the friendship which had grown very strong between Lincoln and Wait Talcott continued to the former's death.

When Lincoln was a candidate for President we were all anxious to have him secure all the votes he consistently could.

In a conversation between Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Talcott, just before the election, Mr. Lincoln called Mr. Talcott to one side and said:

"I know you Talcotts are all strong abolitionists, and while I have had to be very careful in what I said I want you to understand that your opinions and wishes have produced a much stronger impression on my mind than you may think."

In the turmoil of politics, at the time Lincoln was elected President, Mr. Talcott had favored some course which produced coldness between him and the

Honorable E. B. Washburn, who was then a leading Republican member of the House of Representatives and represented this district.

When the internal revenue law was passed Mr. Washburn found out that Mr. Lincoln was intending to give Mr. Talcott an appointment under it, and opposed the appointment. Of all of this Mr. Talcott knew nothing till one day he received by mail a letter signed by Mr. Lincoln, an exact fac-simile of which is reproduced on the following page. Note the close handwriting of Mr. Lincoln.

This letter shows the earnest friendship Mr. Lincoln had for both parties, and his earnest desire that they should work together with him for the common good.

The Hon. Wait Talcott was one of the organizers of the old Free Soil, or as it was called at one time the Free-Democratic party. He was also a conductor on the underground railroad, traveled over by slaves fleeing from Missouri to Canada.

Executive Mansion,

Washington, Aug. 27, 1862.

Hon. Wait Talcott

My dear Sir

I have determined to appoint you Collector. I now have a very special request to make of you, which is that you will make room upon Mr. Washburn, who is also my friend of longer standing than yourself. I shall even be obliged if you can do something for him of occasion presents.

Yours truly

A. Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln

President of the United States of America,

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETING:

Know ye, That, reposing special trust and confidence in the integrity, diligence, and discretion of Wait Talcott of Rockford,
I DO APPOINT HIM a Collector of Taxes for the Second Collection District of the State of Illinois,

and do authorize and empower him to execute and fulfil the duties of that office according to law, and to have and to hold the said office, with all the rights and emoluments thereunto legally appertaining, unto him, the said Wait Talcott during the pleasure of the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES for the time being, and until the end of the next session of the Senate of the United States, and no longer.

In testimony whereof, I have caused these Letters to be made Patent, and the Seal of the Treasury Department of the United States to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the Twenty-fifth day of August in the year of OUR LORD one thousand eight hundred and Sixty three, and of the INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA the eighty Seventh.

BY THE PRESIDENT

Abraham Lincoln

S. Chase

Secretary of the Treasury.

Deputy Collector's Office, Internal Revenue,
Division, 2d District, Illinois.
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

A. Lincoln's Letter Patent
Appointment as Collector of Internal Revenue

Wait Talcott, Esq.,
Collector Second District
ROCKFORD,
ILLINOIS

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

Delivered at the Dedication of the National Cemetery
November 19, 1863

FOUR score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as the final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground.

The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Chronology of Lincoln's Life

1806—Marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, June 12, Washington County, Kentucky.
1809—Born Feb. 12, Hardin (now La Rue) County, Kentucky.
1816—Family removed to Perry County, Indiana.
1818—Death of Abraham's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln.
1819—Second marriage of Thomas Lincoln; married Sally Bush Johnson, Dec. 2, at Elizabethtown, Kentucky.
1830—Lincoln family removed to Illinois, locating in Macon County.
1831—Abraham located at New Salem.
1832—Abraham a Captain in the Black Hawk War.
1833—Appointed postmaster at New Salem.
1834—Abraham a Surveyor. First election to the Legislature.
1835—Love romance with Anne Rutledge.
1836—Second election to the Legislature.
1837—Licensed to practice law.
1838—Third election to the Legislature.
1840—Presidential Elector on Harrison ticket. Fourth election to the Legislature.
1842—Married Nov. 4 to Mary Todd. "Duel" with General Shields.
1843—Birth of Robert Todd Lincoln, Aug. 1.
1846—Elected to Congress. Birth of Edward Baker Lincoln, March 10.
1848—Delegate to the Philadelphia National Convention.
1850—Birth of William Wallace Lincoln, Dec. 2.
1853—Birth of Thomas Lincoln, April 4.
1856—Assists in formation of Republican party.
1858—Joint debate with Stephen A. Douglas. Defeated for the United States Senate.
1860—Nominated and elected to the Presidency.
1861—Inaugurated as President, March 4.
1863—Issued Emancipation Proclamation.
1864—Re-elected to the Presidency.
1865—Assassinated by J. Wilkes Booth, April 14. Died April 15. Remains interred at Springfield, Ill., May 4.

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